

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 9 are pending in the application.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 1-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Macher et al.* in view of *Skiver et al.*

Claim 1 as amended defines an interior light assembly for motor vehicles that has a frame having a frame opening and defining an interior of the interior light assembly. At least one lens is connected to the frame and fills out the frame opening. At least one illumination element and at least one electroluminescent film are arranged within the area of the frame opening behind the at least one lens in the interior of the interior light assembly so that light emitted by the at least one illumination element and the at least one electroluminescent film passes from the interior through the at least one lens arranged in the frame opening for illuminating a vehicle interior.

The invention thus claims at least one **illumination element and at least one electroluminescent film** arranged behind the at least one lens that fills out the frame opening. Both the illumination element and the electroluminescent film are arranged in the interior of the interior light assembly behind the at least one lens that fills out the frame.

As set forth in the specification in paragraph 0007, the interior light assembly according to the invention comprises an **electroluminescent film in addition to the illumination element**. This has the advantage that the interior light assembly can thus be switched to use only the electroluminescent film for a low intensity illumination of the interior; the switched-on interior light assembly does not disturb the driver. When more light is needed, for example, for reading a road map, the illumination element can be switched on additionally. The electroluminescent film and the illumination element can also be switched on and off simultaneously; the electroluminescent film then generates additional light so that the illumination element can radiate with less intensity.

It is respectfully submitted that *Macher et al.* discloses one and only one lighting element 4, and this lighting element 4 **consists of an at least double-layered electroluminescent film 5 and is connected over the entire surface via an intermediate layer 6 to**

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a carrier film 7" (col. 4, lines 34-38). See also col. 5, lines 4 and 5. The lighting element 4 refers to the configuration consisting of the film 5, the layer 6 and the carrier film 7. The electroluminescent film 5 is **part of the lighting element 4** and is the only part that illuminates. Therefore, the electroluminescent film 5 is the only element that supplies light. There is no illumination element and an electroluminescent film **in addition to the illumination element**.

Moreover, the examiner refers to the element 34 as the frame of the light assembly. The element 34 is the vehicle frame and not the frame of the light assembly (col. 5, lines 45-46). Claim 1 defines that the frame has a frame opening and defines an interior of the interior light assembly and that at least one lens is connected to the frame and fills out the frame opening. The vehicle frame 34 of *Macher et al.* does not fulfill these requirements.

The examiner argues that *Skiver et al.* discloses a mirror with an added feature in the form of a display having an illumination element correlated with a first lens and an electroluminescent film (EL) correlated with a second lens. The examiner refers to col. 13, lines 31-35. In examiner's opinion, it would have been obvious to employ the illumination element and EL of *Skiver et al.* within the mirror of *Macher et al.*

In regard to claim 5, the examiner points to the lenses 42b and 42b/39b as being correlated with the illumination element and an EL film, respectively. The cover 39b belongs to a light sensor, which is positioned in hollow socket 39 having a rearward opening 39a in the back wall 38 of case 12. The lens cover 39b is positioned in the socket so that the light sensor detects the light level outside the vehicle. Lens cover 39b has nothing to do with an illumination element. The light sensor that is covered by the lens cover is not described in any more detail; in any case, it senses exterior light conditions and does not illuminate. The two covers 42b (Fig. 4) are both correlated with light sources in the form of incandescent bulbs 158 or LEDs (see col. 16, lines 6-45). Therefore, *Skiver et al.* teaches a housing with two separate openings and two separated lenses for two light assemblies.

The examiner makes reference to col. 13, lines 31-35, of *Skiver et al.* as showing that one of the lenses (42b/39b) is correlated with an electroluminescent (EL) film. This text

portion relates only to the **display module** (the element 20, 52) that may comprises a light emitting source that can be an LED or an EL film. The electroluminescent film is not correlated with any of the lenses mentioned by the examiner but only with the display module 20, 52 that displays information in the form of alpha-numeric indicia or symbolic or graphical indicia, such as icons, including for example passenger safety information (see col. 9, lines 40ff). The light emitting source can be in the form of individual light emitting segments to create indicia or can be arranged behind a mask that creates the indicia (see col. 13, lines 35-40). Moreover, the display can be dimmed according to ambient light conditions: at night the luminous intensity is reduced from daytime values of 100 candela/sq. meter to no greater than 50 candela/sq. meter (see Abstract; see col. 9, lines 40ff). Clearly, such a display is not provided to illuminate the interior of the vehicle - the display is a means for providing information wherein it is ensured that the displayed information can be read properly so that the luminous intensity is increased during the day while it is reduced at night. This is well known e.g. from dashboard illumination for instruments such as the speedometer. However, a dashboard illumination that allows the driver to read the illuminated instruments certainly is not an illumination means for illuminating the vehicle interior. A display has means for illuminating the informational contents to be displayed but in and of itself it does not provide a source of illumination, for example, to be able to read a road map, as evidenced by the fact that the luminous intensity is reduced at night time. A person skilled in the art would not consider a display as a means for illuminating a vehicle interior.

Therefore, the only teaching to be derived from *Skiver et al.* is that illumination of the vehicle interior is to be established by way of two separate light assemblies 42 (see col. 15, lines 55ff).

The two lenses 42b are seated within individual openings 46 of the mirror housing and therefore do not show the feature of claim 1 according to which at least one lens filling the frame opening is provided and the illumination element and the electroluminescent film are arranged within the interior defined by the frame in the area of the frame opening behind the at least one lens.

There is no suggestion in the cited prior art to arranged an electroluminescent film

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and an additional illumination element within the area of the frame opening behind the at least one lens that fills out the frame opening in the interior of the interior light assembly so that light emitted by the illumination element and the electroluminescent film passes from the interior through the lens arranged in the frame opening for illuminating a vehicle interior. A combination of the teachings of *Macher et al.* and *Skiver et al.* would at most lead to providing the EL-based lighting element 4 of *Macher et al.* so as to surround the light assembly 42 of *Skiver et al.* in the same way as the element 4 surrounds the mirrors in the embodiments of Figs. 3 and 4 of *Macher et al.* A teaching to arrange both the EL-based element and the additional illumination element within the interior of a frame that has a frame opening filled out by at least one lens is not provided by the prior art references.

Claim 1 and its dependent claims are therefore believed to be allowable.

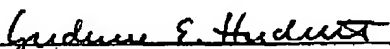
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance and such allowance is respectfully solicited.

Should the Examiner have any further objections or suggestions, the undersigned would appreciate a phone call or e-mail from the examiner to discuss appropriate amendments to place the application into condition for allowance.

Authorization is herewith given to charge any fees or any shortages in any fees required during prosecution of this application and not paid by other means to Patent and Trademark Office deposit account 50-1199.

Respectfully submitted on July 15, 2004,



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